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MABRAY JOYCE A
86 KABUL 1648

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TU-154 DEPARTED, IT WAS ESCORTED BY FOUR MI-24'S
EACH FLYING LOW DISPENSING A HIGH VOLUME OF
INCENDIARY FLARES (TO DIVERT SAM'S). THE TU-154
IMMEDIATELY CLIMBED EXTREMELY RAPIDLY REACHING
APPROXIMATELY 20,000 FEET AFTER ONLY A FEW MINUTES.

3. (C) COMMENT:

(A) NAJIB'S VISIT TO MOSCOW COMES ON THE HEELS
OF PAKISTANI DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ABIUL SATTAR'S
VISIT THERE AND IN THE WAKE OF THE PDPA 20TH PLENUM
WHICH STRIPPED BABRAK KARMAL OF HIS REMAINING PRINCIPAL
PARTY AND STATE POSTS AND WHICH PRECEDED BY DAYS REMOVAL
OF THE DRA DEFENSE AND FOREIGN MINISTERS.

(B) THE VISITS OF NAJIB AND SATTAR TO MOSCOW,
FOLLOWING GORBACHEV'S TRIP TO INDIA AND THE RECENT
CORDOVEZ SHUTTLE, SUGGEST THAT THE SOVIET-DRA AND
PAKISTANI SIDES MAY BE STRIVING FOR A BREAKTHROUGH ON

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A TIMETABLE FOR WITHDRAWAL (INCLUDING BOTH QUESTIONS
OF WITHDRAWAL INTERVAL AND WHEN A WITHDRAWAL WOULD
BEGIN). ON THE OTHER HAND THE SOVIETS MAY SIMPLY
BE ATTEMPTING TO POSITION THEMSELVES IN A MORE
POSITIVE WAY FROM A PROPAGANDA PERSPECTIVE. ESPECIALLY

IN LIGHT OF THE FAILURE OF THEIR OCTOBER "WITHDRAWAL"
RUSE AND CONTINUED INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE, EVIDENCED
BY THE LATEST UNGA VOTE ON AFGHANISTAN.

(C) WE STRONGLY SUSPECT THAT THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL
INSTABILITY AND CONTINUED PARTY FACTIONALISM WITHIN
THE DRA AND PDPA WILL ALSO BE ON THE AGENDA. WE EXPECT
THAT MOSCOW WILL CONTINUE TO EMPHASIZE TO NAJIB THE
NEED TO AVOID TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE EXACERBATING
TENSIONS WITHIN THE PARHAM FACTION OF THE PDPA,
A POSITION WE HAVE BEEN TOLD REPEATEDLY THAT THE SOVIETS
HERE HAVE TAKEN WITH NAJIB IN RECENT MONTHS.

(D) THERE ALSO MAY BE AN ELEMENT INVOLVED OF THE
"LAYING ON OF HANDS," I.E., SOVIET LEGITIMIZATION
OF THE CURRENT REGIME. IN ANY CASE, CONSIDERING THE
NUMBER OF DRA HEAVY HITTERS IN THE DELEGATION, WE
EXPECT THIS TO BE NEITHER AN EXTENDED VISIT NOR
FOR THERE TO BE ANY RESOLUTION OF THE CORE PROBLEM
OF HOW NAJIB CAN CONSOLIDATE POWER WITHOUT FURTHER
ANTAGONIZING HIS PARTY OPPONENTS. END COMMENT.

4. MOSCOW MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. EALUM
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